

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 155350

45

ORIGIN AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 PA-03 RSC-01 /048 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:CLDARIS:IW

8/7/73 EXT 20842

APPROVED BY AF/W:ORAGGREY

AFR/CWR:HFARNHAM (INFO)

----- 027062

P R 071710Z AUG 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

UNCLAS STATE 155350

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, UV

SUBJ: WEST AFRICA GETS MAKESHIFT DROUGHT AID

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF DAVID OTTAWAY STORY WHICH APPEARED
WASHINGTON POST AUGUST 7. BEGIN TEXT:

1. THE WEST GERMAN AIR FORCE C-160 TRANSPORT SWOOPED DOWN
OVER THE LOW HILLS SURROUNDING THE MUD-BRICK, THATCHED HUTS
OF ARIBINDA AS IF PREPARING TO LAND ON THE DIRT AIRSTRIP
JUST TO THE WEST.

2. WHEN IT WAS ONLY SIX FEET FROM THE GROUND, THE PILOT
PRESSED FORWARD ON THE THROTTLE AND THE PLANE SHOT SKYWARD.
AT JUST THAT MOMENT, FIVE U.S. PEACE CORPSMEN AND TWO WEST
GERMAN CREW MEMBERS PUSHED A WOODEN PALLET WITH OVER A TON
OF AMERICAN GRAIN BUNDLED ON IT OUT THE BACK.

3. SEVEN TIMES THE TRANSALL CARGO PLANE PASSED OVER THE
ISOLATED VILLAGE, EACH TIME DROPPING A PALLET WITH 27 110-
SACKS ON OR NEAR THE TINY AIRPORT.

4. NEARBY, SEVERAL THOUSAND HALF STARVED FULANI PEASANTS
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 155350

STOOD WATCHING AS THE FIRST FOOD THEY HAD RECEIVED IN
SEVERAL WEEKS FELL FROM THE LOW-FLYING.

5. WHEN THE LAST RUN OVER THE VILLAGE WAS COMPLETED, THE

AIRSTrip WAS LITTERED WITH SPLINTERED PALLETS AND SACKS, SOME OF WHICH HAD BEEN BROKEN OPEN BY THE IMPACT OF THE FALL. BUT ALL BUT 10 PER CENT OF THE 13 TONS OF AMERICAN SUPPLIED SORGHUM WOULD LATER BE RECOVERED BY THE VILLAGERS.

6. IT IS IN THIS MAKESHIFT FASHION THAT EMERGENCY RELIEF FOOD COMING FROM THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE IS NOW BEING DELIVERED TO THE REMOTE VILLAGES IN NORTHERN-MOST UPPER VOLTA, WHERE HEAVY RAINS HAVE NOW SET IN MAKING THE ROADS MOSTLY IMPASSABLE.

7. THIS SEMI-DESERT LAND-LOCKED COUNTRY OF 5.2 MILLION INHABITANTS, ONE OF THE POOREST IN THE WORLD, IS STRUGGLING TO RECOVER FROM A SIX-YEAR DROUGHT THOUGHT TO BE THE WORST OF THE CENTURY. WITH STOCKS EXHAUSTED AND CROPS JUST PLANTED, 500,000 PERSONS IN THE FAR REACHES OF UPPER VOLTA, ONE OUT OF EVERY TEN VOLTANS, IS NOW TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON AIR DROPS OF GRAIN UNTIL THE HARVEST IN SEPTEMBER.

8. FLYING NORTH FROM THE VOLTAN CAPITAL OF OUAGADOUGOU, ONE SEES VAST STRETCHES OF FLOODED PLAINS AND OVERFLOWING RIVERS THAT ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO WERE LITTERED WITH THE CARCASSES OF DEAD CATTLE, CAMELS AND GOATS. NOW, THERE IS SO MUCH WATER FROM THE RAINS WHICH HAVE COME LATE AND ARE LESS PLENTIFUL THAN NORMAL AGAIN THIS YEAR THAT THE MAIN ROAD LEADING NORTH FROM THE CAPITAL IS OFTEN CUT ON THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS.

9. THE MAKESHIFT SYSTEM OF AIR-DROPPING FOOD WITHOUT PARACHUTES, WHICH THE EXPERIMENT AT ARIBINDA SHOWED HAS A 90 PER CENT SUCCESS RATE, WAS THE BRAINCHILD OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR HERE, DONALD B. EASUM, WHO ROPED WEST GERMAN AND BELGIAN PILOTS, VOLTAN RED CROSS VOLUNTEERS AND VACATIONING PEACE CORPSMEN INTO HELPING HIM.

10. "IT'S A GREAT SUCCESS, GIVEN WHAT WE'RE WORKING WITH," SAID EASUM. THE 49-YEAR-OLD BEARDED, BESPECTACLED AMBASSADOR
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 155350

SADOR, WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS AN "ACTIVIST," HAS BECOME THE KEY MAN IN THE COUNTRY FOR KEEPING THE AIRLIFT GOING TO THE NORTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY.

11. WITH NO PARACHUTES AVAILABLE AND INTERMITTENT COOPERATION FROM VOLTAN OFFICIALS, THIS IS NOT ALWAYS AN EASY TASK, AS THE RUN TO ARIBINDA 200 MILES NORTH OF HERE DEMONSTRATED.

12. JUST LOADING THE GERMAN TRANSPORT AT THE ILL-EQUIPPED OUAGADOUGOU AIRPORT ON RECENT SATURDAY TOOK ABOUT THREE HOURS AS THE AUTOMATIC LOADER AND LIFT FORKS TOOK TURNS STALLING OR BREAKING DOWN.

13. IN SHIRTSLEEVES AND WITH HIS BROW PERSPIRING PROFUSELY EASUM HIMSELF HAD TO HELP PUSH THE 1.3-TON PALLETS OFF A RICKETY TRUCK AND INTO THE CARGO HOLD. ONLY ONCE DID A MIDDLE-RANKING VOLTAN OFFICIAL APPEAR ON THE SCENE THAT SULTRY SATURDAY AFTERNOON TO SEE HOW THE OPERATION WAS GOING. FIVE MINUTES LATER, HE DISAPPEARED.

14. WHILE VOLTAN TEEN-AGE VOLUNTEERS ARE EASY TO FIND AND EAGER TO WORK, IT IS ANOTHER MATTER TO FIND VOLTAN OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM, ACCORDING TO ALL FOREIGNERS WORKING IN THE EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM HERE.

15. EASUM SPENDS HOURS EVERY DAY RUNNING ABOUT THE HOTELS, OFFICES AND PRIVATE VOLTAN RESIDENCES TRYING TO FIND THE RIGHT OFFICIAL TO GIVE THE NECESSARY ORDERS.

16. "WHAT YOU NEED HERE IS SOMEONE YOU CAN CONTACT 24 HOURS A DAY, AND THAT HAS NOT HAPPENED," REMARKED THE AMBASSADOR VISIBLY FRUSTRATED BY THE LACK OF FULL-TIME COOPERATION FROM VOLTAN OFFICIALDOM.

17. AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF BEING PESTERED, THE VOLTAN GOVERNMENT FINALLY DISTRIBUTED TO EMBASSIES THE NAME OF THE OFFICIAL WHOM THEY WERE TO CONTACT ABOUT THE EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM. BUT NEITHER HIS PHONE NUMBER NOR HIS ADDRESS WAS INDICATED.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 155350

18. YET THE SITUATION IS SO SERIOUS THAT 10 OF THE COUNTRY'S 44 DISTRICTS, ALL OF THEM IN THE FAR NORTH ARE NOW RELYING TOTALLY UPON THE FREE DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN-SUPPLIED GRAIN TO KEEP THEIR PEOPLE ALIVE.

19. ONE VOLTAN OFFICIAL EXPLAINED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN OVERWHELMED BY THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DISASTER AND THEREFORE HAD TO DEPEND ON FOREIGNERS TO RUN THE RELIEF OPERATIONS.

20. THE SITUATION IN DORI, THE NORTHERNMOST POINT NOW OPEN TO TRAFFIC, 175 MILES NORTH OF HERE, SEEMED INDICATIVE OF THE PLIGHT FACING VOLTAN NOMADS AND PEASANTS BEREFT OF FOOD, MONEY AND MOST OF THEIR CATTLE.

21. THE TOWN IS CROWDED WITH FULANI AND TUAREG NOMADS WHO HAVE COME SOUTH FROM MALI AND NIGER IN THEIR DESPERATE SEARCH FOR FOOD AND WATER, HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED IN POPULATION. BUT THERE IS NO GRAIN TO BE BOUGHT ON THE OPEN MARKET, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD TO ARREST 60 MERCHANTS FOR BLACK-MARKETING 110 POUND GRAIN SACKS FOR AS MUCH AS \$30, NEARLY TRIPLE THE OFFICIAL PRICE.

22. BUT THE COMING OF THE RAINS HAS PAINTED THE PARCHED AND BARREN PLAINS WITH A NEW COAT OF GREENERY AND THE DRIED OUT LAKE THAT FORMERLY ALMOST ENCIRCLED DORI NOW HAS A FEW PONDS IN ITS BED AROUND WHICH SCRAWNY SHEEP AND GOATS ARE GRAZING.

23. IN THE VIEW OF KAM OLET BABOUBACAR, THE GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED MAYOR, THE WORST IS OVER. PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER EATING LEAVES AND COTTON SEED AIR-DROPPED FOR THE ANIMALS, AND THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC, WHICH CAUSED 189 OFFICIALLY REGISTERED DEATHS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, IS OVER.

24. FOR NOW, THERE IS EVEN ENOUGH AMERICAN GRAIN COMING INTO THE TOWN OVERLAND TO KEEP THE 130,000 TO 150,000 NOMADS FROM MALI AND NIGER IN THE AREA FROM STARVING.

25. BUT BABOUCAR IS CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 155350

26. "AT THE END OF AUGUST, WE CAN SAY WHETHER THINGS ARE GOOD OR BAD. IF THE RAINS DON'T CONTINUE FALLING IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, THERE WILL BE AN EVEN WORSE CRISIS NEXT YEAR." END TEXT. ROGERS

UNCLASSIFIED

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE155350
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AF/W:CLDARIS:IW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730869/abqcenar.tel
Line Count: 192
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <04 MAR 2002 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WEST AFRICA GETS MAKESHIFT DROUGHT AID
TAGS: ASEC, IN
To: OUAGADOUGOU INFO PARIS
ROME
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005